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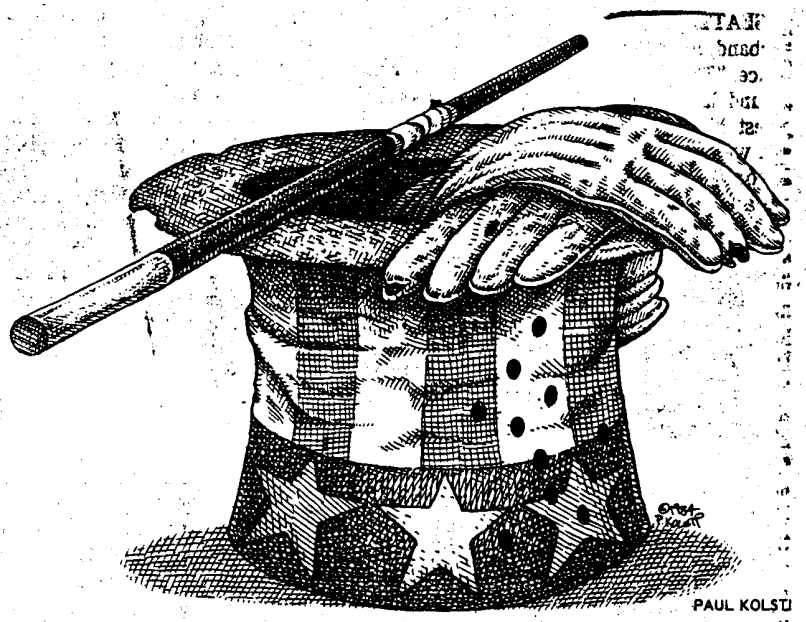
No one is honest in real world; that's why U.S. needs its CIA

By JACK STEPHENSON



PAUL KOLSTO

BECAUSE in normal diplomatic relations governments have not been totally open with one another, undercover operations have been used for centuries to ferret out the truth.

The most recent charter for undercover operations by the United States government is contained in the National Security Act of 1947. Through this law, Congress and President Harry S. Truman created the Central Intelligence Agency.

CIA has two basic duties, both of which require undercover operations. The first is the gathering of information and making intelligence collections, including the use of undercover operations, known in this context as espionage.

Espionage is carried out by the Clandestine Services. The case officers in this group identify, recruit, test and put to work agents who have access to information about other countries. This is intelligence which the American government needs but cannot obtain from open sources. The greatest need is for information revealing the true intentions of foreign governments.

The successful Clandestine Services officer, who in real life bears little resemblance to James Bond, must not only understand but also control his agents. The relationship between officer and agent can become quite close, but it is always governed by the old admonition: Don't fall in love with your agent. The good officer has but one devotion — the fulfillment of the intelligence requirements assigned.

Jack Stephenson of St. Helens is a former official of the Central Intelligence Agency. As part of the "Great Decisions '85" series, sponsored by the World Affairs Council of Oregon, he will debate Gordon Schloming on covert operations in U.S. foreign policy Tuesday, March 5, at noon at Willamette Center auditorium, 121 S.W. Salmon St.

The second duty of the CIA is derived from certain language in the 1947 act. The act said that CIA shall "perform such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may, from time to time, direct." Because there was no specific prohibition of covert action in the act, the executive branch interpreted the law to mean implied consent. Thus began a long history of directives to CIA from the executive, via the NSC, calling for foreign intervention of all types.

Congress always was informed of these covert activities through a small and select group of the most senior members of both houses. This procedure continued luntil 1974, at which time CIA was required to report to eight committees of Congress. Also at this time, under the structures of the Hughes-Ryan Amendment, the president was required to affirm that each operation was important to national security.

After a deluge of leaks in 1975, the number of committees was cut back to two — one in each branch of Congress. Currently there is a proposal to reduce the congressional oversight structure to one joint committee.

Covert action too often is perceived as synonymous with not-so-secret military intervention. However, it is also quiet, or hidden, support to those countries that are struggling against communism or dictatorships of both the right and left. This is support for which the United States must receive no credit.

Covert action should be retained as an option by our policy makers because the government needs to use every possible vehicle to bring democracy to the world. Some of our adversaries are not honorable, and we sometimes must get down in the muddy trenches with them. Our foreign policy may benefit from an option that lies between standard diplomacy and sending in the Marines.

Nations, almost certainly, will continue to mislead their adversaries. If history is any guide to our future, the second-oldest profession, spying, will be used by governments to penetrate this cloak of deceit for many more years to come.